LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Updated 9/24/2020

COVID-19 Contact Tracing in Schools

When a COVID-19 infection is identified among a student or staff member in a school, it is critical to conduct immediate contact tracing and identify all students and staff members who have been in close contact with this person. This should be done individually for each person identified with COVID-19 in the school, including laboratory confirmed and suspect cases (see step 1 below).

Contact tracing slows the spread of COVID-19 by identifying and notifying people that they may have been exposed, asking them to monitor their health, and asking them to self-quarantine. Timely and thorough contact tracing can effectively interrupt the chain of disease transmission and is an important public health intervention to prevent or contain an outbreak. By keeping those that may have been exposed to COVID-19 away from others, further transmission may be prevented.

This document outlines the actions that should be taken when a person with COVID-19 is identified in a school: 1. Steps to identify COVID-19 infections and report to LDH; 2. Steps to identify and notify close contacts; and 3. Steps to conduct cleaning and disinfection.

1. Steps to identify COVID-19 infections and report to LDH

- **Identify a person with COVID-19 infection.** A person with COVID-19 infection that would require reporting to LDH and conducting contact tracing is defined as:
  - Laboratory-Confirmed Case: someone who receives a positive COVID-19 viral test result, including molecular/PCR or antigen tests, whether rapid or send-out. Antibody tests indicate past exposure and *should not* be used to diagnose current infection or to initiate contact tracing.

    OR
  - Suspect Case: someone who is clinically diagnosed with COVID-19 or meets the following clinical criteria:
    - At least one of the following major COVID-19 symptoms: cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, or new changes in sense of smell or taste

      OR
    - At least two of the following minor COVID-19 symptoms: fever (measured or subjective), chills, rigors, muscle ache/myalgia, headache, sore throat, nausea/vomiting, diarrhea, congestion/runny nose or fatigue

      AND
    - No alternative more likely diagnosis
    - If a suspect case subsequently tests negative by molecular/PCR test, they can return to school when they are symptom-free for 24 hours and any close contacts that have been quarantined may return to school. If a suspect case tests negative by antigen test, they should continue to follow recommendations for suspect cases as antigen tests are not as sensitive as molecular/PCR tests and may result in a false negative.
  - If a person has symptoms but does not meet the symptom criteria for suspect cases above, they should be sent home and not return to school until they are symptom-free for 24 hours. Contact tracing does not need to be done for these individuals.

- **Isolate and send the person home immediately.** They should not return to school until the following "end of self-isolation criteria" are met:
  - For a person with ANY symptom(s):
    - At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared **AND**
    - At least 24 hours have passed since the resolution of fever without the use of fever reducing medications **AND**
    - Other symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath) have improved.
  - For a person who remained asymptomatic (i.e., never had any symptoms):
    - At least 10 days have passed since positive test collection date.
- **Report all confirmed and suspect cases to Louisiana Office of Public Health (OPH) using the online School COVID-19 Reporting Portal.** If you have questions, contact schoolcovidreporting@la.gov. Regional OPH Offices are available to provide consultation and recommendations upon request.

2. Steps to identify and notify close contacts of persons identified as having COVID-19 infection

- **Determine who has been in close contact with suspect and confirmed COVID-19 cases in school during their infectious period**.
  - Close contact is defined as
    - being within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes **OR**
    - having direct contact with an infected person, including touching, hugging, kissing, or sharing eating or drinking utensils; or if an infected person sneezed, coughed, or somehow got respiratory droplets on another person
  - The infectious period includes the 48 hours before the day the person became sick (or the 48 hours before specimen collection if asymptomatic) until the person was isolated.
  - Use of face coverings and plastic dividers are not considered in determining close contacts, though they do reduce the risk of transmission.
  - Identify close contacts that may have occurred during any time or place the person was at school during the infectious period, including in the classrooms, during recess or lunch, and during extra-curricular activities.
  - If a close contact is identified **who was diagnosed with COVID-19** by a positive molecular/PCR test (not an antigen or antibody test) within the last 90 days and
    - they do not have symptoms, they do not need to quarantine unless symptoms develop.
    - they do have symptoms, they should self-quarantine immediately for 14 days and consult with a medical provider to determine if they may have been re-infected with COVID-19 or if symptoms are caused by something else.
- **Notify close contacts of the need to quarantine.**
  - Notify all close contacts of suspect and confirmed cases that they have been identified as having been exposed to someone who is or may be ill with COVID-19 and will need to quarantine and stay out of school for 14 days from the last date they were exposed. A template letter can be provided to the school by the Office of Public Health.
  - Encourage the close contacts to call the Louisiana Department of Public Health Contact Tracers at 1-877-766-2130.

- **Ensure close contacts remain out of school until the end of their quarantine period.**
  - Close contacts should not return to school until 14 days have passed from the last date they were exposed.
  - If a close contact in quarantine becomes symptomatic and tests positive, they would be considered a case as of the day their symptoms began and would need to follow "end of self-isolation criteria" above to return to school.
  - If a close contact in quarantine becomes symptomatic but is not tested, they would be considered a case as of the day their symptoms began and would need to follow "end of self-isolation criteria" above to return to school or 14 day quarantine, whichever is longer.
  - If a close contact in quarantine tests positive but does not develop symptoms, they would be considered a case as of the day their test was collected and would need to follow "end of self-isolation" criteria above to return to school.
  - If a close contact tests negative during their quarantine period, they should remain in quarantine for the duration of the 14 days and monitor for the development of symptoms at any time during the quarantine period.
  - If a suspect case tests negative by molecular/PCR test, any quarantined close contacts of that suspect case may return to school
- **OPH recommends schools consider notifying the entire school community that there was a person with COVID-19 infection identified and close contacts have been notified.**

3. Steps to conduct cleaning and disinfection according to CDC guidance

- Close off areas used by the persons with COVID-19 and wait as long as practical before beginning cleaning and disinfection to minimize potential for exposure to respiratory droplets
  - Open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in the area.
  - If possible, wait up to 24 hours before beginning cleaning and disinfection.
- Clean and disinfect all areas (e.g., offices, bathrooms, and common areas) used by the person(s) with COVID-19, focusing especially on frequently touched surfaces
  - Surfaces should be cleaned using soap (or a detergent) and water prior to disinfection.
  - For disinfection, most common EPA-registered household disinfectants should be effective against the virus that causes COVID-19. Check EPA's list of disinfection products.
- See full CDC Cleaning, Disinfection, and Hand Hygiene in Schools Guidance.

Document Updates:

Date	Update
9/24/2020	Added clarifications that close contacts of both confirmed and suspected cases should be quarantined
9/24/2020	Added clarifications that suspect cases who test negative by antigen test would still be considered suspect cases. Only PCR negative tests rule out suspect COVID-19.